



NEWS RELEASE

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TRAINING ADDS LANGUAGE SKILLS FOR IRAQ DUTY

By Deb Skidmore
Media relations officer

Fort Riley Soldiers are learning a new language – Arabic.

Soldiers are going through the Defense Language Institute instruction and training and taking “Tactical Iraqi,” a computer based program, said Capt. Janine Taylor, assistant S2 of 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division.

Soldiers from 1st Bde. received language training from DLI at Monterey, Calif., for three days while Soldiers from the 541st Combat Sustainment Support Battalion received four days of language training on the computer-based program.

She said that Fort Riley Soldiers are being prepared for future deployments to Iraq through these programs that will train them in the Arabic language and customs. She added that the programs are designed to help military personnel gain a basic understanding of the Iraqi culture. The programs focus on face-to-face communications skills Soldiers will need to carry out daily tasks and missions.

“I have been to Iraq before and didn’t have this kind of training,” said Sgt. 1st Class Gerardo Ramon of Battery B, 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery. “These classes help us interact with the civilians. I think it will keep me much safer.”

Ali Abueisa, an Iraqi-born DLI instructor, told a classroom of 1st Bn., 5th FA, Soldiers that Americans have broken the ice since they have been in Iraq, but “now it is time to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqis.” He explained that this can be done by interacting with citizens on the street.

Pfc. Albert Lenowicz of Btry. B, 1st Bn., 5th FA, agreed, saying, “These classes give us a better understanding of their culture. It gives us a better appreciation of their society.”

Lenowicz, 25, from Syracuse, N.Y., said he has not deployed to Iraq but feels that daily interaction with Iraqis will make him more confident when his unit deploys later this year.

“This is the third day of the training in DLI,” he said, “and I can get along fairly well with daily conversation already. I think it will be a nice foundation while we are there so we will be better immersed in their culture and language.”

He said the Arabic language was a little daunting at first but was easier to master than he thought it would be. He said he has some background in Spanish, Chinese and Italian in addition to this Arabic training.

Second Lt. Jeff Dickson of Btry B, 1st Bn., 5th FA, said he has not deployed to Iraq but did a tour in Afghanistan with the 82nd Airborne Division. "There was a big language barrier in Afghanistan. We had limited (language) training," said the 35-year-old Kansas City, Mo., native. He added the pronunciation in Arabic is difficult but necessary.

"It will keep us safer," he stressed. "Things have changed in Iraq since the war began. We now have time to say 'Hello' and 'How are you doing?' to the Iraqi citizens."

He explained that earlier in the war the focus was more difficult. Soldiers gave basic commands such as "Stop and Lie Down," he said. "Now we are doing basic greetings and niceties."

The classes are actually fun, said 1st Lt. Ryan Evans of 1st Bn., 5th FA. "You have to have fun to learn," he said, as he and two other Soldiers practiced interacting with each other in Arabic.

"We may not always have an interpreter, and if there is a dangerous situation, this training will help us accomplish our mission," he said.

"This (Tactical Iraqi class) is as close to Iraq as we can get Soldiers without being shot at," said instructor Stephen Franke.

Franke said he has been involved in the program for two years, and the goal of the class is to train the Soldiers to be users of the Iraqi language and customs and train the Soldiers to be trainers. He explained that the classes are user friendly and interactive using the computer program.

Pfc. Anthony Turner of the 541st CSSB was using the computer program under Franke's watchful eye. Turner, 19, from Toledo, Ohio, said he was proficient in German and French and had been working on the Iraqi program for only two days.

"This system is very easy to use, and I've never learned a language so fast," he said.

Taylor added that all of the Iraqi language and custom classes have been well received by the Soldiers. "We are getting a lot of positive remarks," she said. "The Soldiers know these classes will help them in the future."